

the Senate to act promptly on his nomination.

Statement on Medicare and the Patients' Bill of Rights

June 23, 1998

I am pleased to add my voice in support of today's efforts by Representatives Ganske and Dingell to file a discharge petition enabling an up or down vote in the House of Representatives for a Patients' Bill of Rights. Since November of last year, I have been calling on Congress to pass such legislation.

It is now 7 months later and Congress has been unable to pass legislation, let alone hold even one Committee mark-up on a bill. With so many Americans' health at stake, I welcome the action taken today by Representatives Ganske and Dingell, and I believe it will help ensure an open debate on this issue that will allow for all parties, including Representative Norwood, to bring patients' rights legislation to the floor for vote.

Passing patients' rights legislation would build on the actions I have already taken to extend patient protections to Americans in Federal health plans. This Friday, we will publish a Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) regulation to implement new rules for all Medicare managed-care plans. The HCFA regulation will implement the new Medicare plan choices I signed into law last year as a part of the bipartisan balanced budget agreement. It will also include many of the patient protections I directed Medicare to implement last February, when I signed an Executive memorandum ordering all Federal health plans—which serve 85 million Americans—to come into compliance with the Patients' Bill of Rights. These regulations ensure that Medicare beneficiaries in managed-care plans have a range of important patient protections, including access to the specialists they need, access to ob-gyns, access to emergency room services, and an independent appeals process to address grievances with their health plans.

Now we need the Congress to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights that guarantees all Americans these important patient protections. It is my hope and expectation that the

bipartisan action being taken today in Congress will spur the House and the Senate to pass a strong, enforceable, and long-overdue bill.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Legislation

June 23, 1998

I am deeply disappointed in the action taken within the House Appropriations Committee today. Returning to the partisanship of the past, House Republicans backed a bill that would take us backwards just when we should be addressing the challenges of the next century.

Last year we made critical investments in every stage of our children's lives in a bipartisan balanced budget. From Head Start expansion to new tax credits that make college more affordable, we worked together to make smart investments in our people and our future. To build on that success, this year I proposed commonsense investments to reduce class size, modernize America's schools, and make quality child care more affordable.

Working together, we can continue to move the Nation forward. But the House Republican bill takes us in the wrong direction, short-changing critical investments in our young people—from preschool and child care to antidrug and safe after-school programs. These cuts are arbitrary, and some are extreme. This bill would completely eliminate the summer jobs program, denying more than one-half million teenagers valuable work experience. It would slow progress on our efforts to improve children's literacy and computer skills. And for poor families, the Republicans would eliminate the program that they rely on to help them heat their homes during the winter. This bill is out of step with our values and the wrong vision for America's future.